Interview with Frederick W. Flott

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

FREDERICK W. FLOTT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background—where you came from, born, educated?

FLOTT: I was born May 8, 1921 in Chicago. I went to public school for grammar school, and later to a private military prep school in the Chicago suburbs, and then to Carleton College where I got my Bachelor of Arts degree just before getting into the war.

Q: What was your major in college?

FLOTT: International relations.

Q: So you had a feel for...you were interested in...

FLOTT: I knew I was interested anyway. Then let's see. Pearl Harbor was in my junior year. I fortunately had enough credits accumulated so that I was able to graduate in 3 1/4 years, so I very neatly got my BA degree just before I went into the Army. I had a certificate of eligibility to be commissioned, related to having gone to this essentially military prep school. So the day after Pearl Harbor, on Monday morning, right after President Roosevelt declared war, I hitchhiked through a blinding snowstorm, 40 miles,

from Northfield, Minnesota up to Minneapolis to Fort Snelling to say, “Hey, I want to get into the Army”. That was on December 9, 1941. I didn't actually get into the Army until September 10 in '42. But once I did, I was in North Africa three months later. Things moved fast. My program in college was International Relations, with some strength in foreign languages. Then I was in the Army in the war in North Africa and Europe for three and a half years.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

FLOTT: I was an Infantry Officer.

Q: Which Division?

FLOTT: I was assigned to Allied Force Headquarters, since I spoke good French. By American school standards my French was rather good, but among Infantry Officers it was parliamentarian! So I ended up doing a lot of liaison work. I saw a lot of the 34th Infantry Division—the Minnesota National Guard Division—in North Africa. I later did some work with the Third and the Thirty-Sixth—the Texas National Guard, but I was mainly with about four different French divisions. I was in the August 15, 1944 landing in the South of France. I was later in an operation behind the German lines in Occupied France. I do not want to overstate this. It was very much toward the end of things, when the Germans still held the Southwest one-third of France. I did not parachute in. I went in by what was known as “Overland Infiltration”. I was there for a couple of months. In December, 1945 I came home, got demobilized. Then went straight to graduate school—the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Q: At Johns Hopkins?

FLOTT: It now belongs to Johns Hopkins. Then it had just been established by Christian Herter, Paul Nitze and others. I did that for one year; went into the Foreign Service the day after I got my MA. After a few months in training, I was assigned to Paris, where I stayed

for five and a half years. The reason behind this happy first assignment was that since I had been with the French Army during the war and had had some exposure to the French Resistance, the State Department personnel people felt I could be helpful to the Labor Attach# because of all my possible access to Communist trade-union types. Actually, these people would have gladly cut my throat, but if Personnel decided that was a good reason to send me to Paris, I certainly didn't argue with them.

Q: Did you work at all with Irving Brown?

FLOTT: Oh yes, I knew Irving Brown. He had other people working more directly with him, but I certainly tried to be helpful to him in any way I could.

Q: He was a major figure in the post World War American/French labor relations.

FLOTT: Yes.

Q: You were there from '47 -'52 in Paris. What was your impression of the political situation at that time?

FLOTT: The French, of course, were very divided, as they had indeed been during the war. They were perhaps in some danger of going Communist. I wouldn't say they were on the very brink, but it was, in some respects, touch and go. If we had not carried out the Marshall Plan as we did, there certainly would have been considerable disorder, probably some fighting, and the whole recovery of Europe would have been much delayed. But I wouldn't go quite so far as to say that they were all that close to the brink of going Communist. There were a lot of conservative forces at work in France that would probably have pulled them back from the brink in good time. But it was worrisome. In a nutshell, the Marshall Plan did a wonderful job. In the Embassy in Paris, I had a ringside seat on that and knew the people who were running it—David Bruce, Averell Harriman, Henry Tasca, Paul Porter, and all those good people.

Q: What was your impression of David Bruce as the Ambassador? How did he run things?

FLOTT: First rate. First rate in every way. Personally, substantively. He had run the OSS Mission in London during the War and was, of course, a hands-on solver of problems—inclined that way. Whenever there was a rumor of some hidden Nazi, like Martin Bormann, for example—rumors that he was in Spain or France. David Bruce pursued the matter with more direct involvement than you would expect from an Ambassador to a large country. And he very much encouraged his boys who were looking after these things. He was also a very gracious gentleman. I served later under him in Germany as well, and he was just first rate. As was Averell Harriman.

Q: Averell Harriman was a different type wasn't he? How did you find him? He was running the aid...the Marshall Plan?

FLOTT: What was it called? The Economic Cooperation...Administration, I think. It went through various names. Averell Harriman was perhaps more directly connected to the political administration in Washington. But Bruce was also a very distinguished Democrat and had good ties in Washington, too.

Q: Can you give an idea, a feel for how we viewed the French government at that time. I mean it was the beginning of these series of governments that kept changing, wasn't it?

FLOTT: Yes, they changed a lot. They had some good people in it who were individually bright. Their collective efforts were often subject to divisions determined by French politics and French social structure and other factors. But looking back on it and taking into account where they came from in terms of just having been through the initial defeat by Germany, the rest of the war, and the rather spotty Liberation period, I would give them credit for being pretty broad gauge and reasonably willing to be able to forgive and forget, at least to work constructively with the Germans and others in Europe. “Forgive and forget”

would be overstating it, but they were willing to take an objective view of where their interests lay, and to pursue these interests intelligently.

Q: Were we having to be careful or not, not to rake over the coals of the occupation time. There were all sorts of people who were tainted in one way or another by collaboration. How did we treat that?

FLOTT: First of all, there was not a policy laid down. There was the case by case action, by people of stature and experience, and the normal exercise of good sense. There was perhaps a feeling that you catch more flies with molasses than you do with vinegar and that, at a certain point, you have to let bygones be bygones in favor of producing results. The French government was very generous about overstating, if anything, the importance of the Resistance movement, partly because it got France off the hook of having been so largely collaborationist. The French political scene during the war was pretty much collaborationist. The extent to which this was the case is still coming out in the latest writings on the subject in France.

So the best way to expunge some of that from the record was to talk about how magnificent the Resistance had been. The U.S. government, of course, let the French run their internal affairs.

I don't remember any formal or hard positions we took on the subject.

Q: This was a very critical period from '47-51. Things were beginning to harden into the Cold War. What were our relations with the different labor movements—the Communists on one side and the Socialist on the other?

FLOTT: The largest trade union movement, the most broadly based one, was the C.G.T. While leftist, it was, of course, not totally Communist. Although obviously heavily infiltrated and influenced by Communists, C.G.T. leaders would deal in a civil way with their American trade unionist brothers, which was why the work of people like Irving Brown was

so important. Irving Brown and other American labor people over there were good patriots who were willing to hear what the Embassy had to say on the subjects. So we felt, as an Embassy we felt, we had enough input into the process, On the other hand, the extreme Communists, the ones who went even beyond the trade union movement, criticized anything the Americans did. We made food deliveries under the Marshall Plan. They criticized that. They'd say that powdered eggs from America are bad for you. The French had had a bad harvest in 1947, and the Marshall Plan sent massive quantities of cornmeal as a substitute for flour. Cornmeal was new to them, and the Communists said that this is fed only to pigs. I remember in “L'Humanit#", the French Communist newspaper, they ran a large cartoon criticizing the Marshall Plan. It showed a ship being unloaded and they included in the cartoon what they claimed were the three worst things the Americans were shipping to France—the three things the Communists wanted to criticize most. One was armament—showed a cannon being off-loaded; then big barrels of powdered eggs coming off, which would give any Frenchman indigestion just seeing it; and the third worst thing were cases marked Champagne from California—”Champagne de Californie”!

But the Communists couldn't go too far out; they could play on popular frames of reference and prejudices and things of that sort, but they couldn't get too directly anti-American, because the French people did regard the Americans as their liberators.

Q: Did you have any contact with Maurice Thorez, the head of the French Communist Party?

FLOTT: I certainly didn't deal with him directly. I may have met him at some reception, but I doubt it. He was not working the Embassies circuit! He was, after all, a foreign agent who had deserted from the French Army at the time of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, when Moscow was attacking French mobilization against the Nazis.

Q: Did we consider the French Communist Party, with Thorez as its head, the absolute tool of the Kuomintang or of the Soviets, or not at that time?

FLOTT: A tool of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union? Oh, absolutely, no doubt about it. Now that doesn't mean that every single Frenchman who voted Communist, was equally in their pocket, but the leadership—there's no doubt about it. That's been proven—there's documentation of it both from defectors from the French and from the Soviet Communist parties. But the French Communists did get a substantial protest vote from some otherwise patriotic French people, especially right after the war.

Q: They've always been known as the most disciplined as far as their ties to the Soviets in Europe, I think.

FLOTT: Yes, I guess they were. Maurice Thorez is a complicated story. In 1939 the reason the Germans felt secure in invading Poland was that they were hand-in-glove with the Russians in doing so. At that point, when France went to war, along with Great Britain in September '39; Thorez first deserted from the French Army and secondly announced that this was a bourgeois, capitalistic war that the people should have no part of. But, needless to say, on June 22 of '41, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, Thorez changed his tune immediately. But there's no doubt that once the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, the French Communists became the most militant elements in the Resistance. They were willing to do anything to kill a handful of Germans, even if it meant the destruction of whole French villages and everything else. They went all out, which made them attractive in some ways to people around them who planned operations against the Germans. But the French, the bourgeois middle class French, were basically suspicious of the Communists, and with good reason. But it would be hard to deny that among the forces fighting in the Resistance, the Communists were the most all-out and militant—of late date, of course, after the invasion of Russia.

Q: Were there other Labor Officers?

FLOTT: It was basically Irving Brown's people who came and went and there would be Foreign Service Officers in the labor attach# business. From where I sat, first at a

very modest level in the Consular Section, and later in the Economic Section; we talked with them. All the people there at that time—we had a collegial relation with them—and anything we learned that might be helpful to them, we passed on to Irving Brown and his people.

Q: You left Paris in 1952?

FLOTT: Yes, September, 1952.

Q: You went to Madrid for a while?

FLOTT: Yes. In August 1951, the Marshall Plan, whatever it was called then...MSA, ECA, —whatever, decided to have a very limited involvement in Spain. Now Spain was not a Marshall Plan country. It had been pro-German during the War, and still had a fascist government, so it wasn't likely to get Marshall Plan aid. But American politics played a part. On the American political scene, in July of '51, it was decided by conservative right wing Americans—some of whom were from Nevada and wanted to get Basque sheep herders from Spain—that since we're giving all this aid to the socialist governments in Western Europe, we should also do something for a good Christian country like Spain, which was staunchly anti-communist.

Q: The same thing also applied to Ireland, which happily sat out the War, but politics being what they are...

FLOTT: ...they got good treatment. So it was decided that we would do something for Spain. It was a very limited effort. The first budget in 1951 dollars was the still modest sum, even then, of 50 million dollars. At that time, the US government knew it was going to seek base negotiations, to put B47 bases in Spain. A group was set up called the TESG —the Temporary Economic Survey Group, which consisted of about 10 economists under the leadership of Dr. Sidney Suffrin, from Syracuse University. This was an MSA/ECA project. They were to go to Spain and do a basic study of the Spanish economy. The

Spanish economy was really simple enough in 1951 that a group of 10 economists could carry out a National Income Study. The leadership of the Marshall Plan in Paris decided that they would send down, with this group of economists, one officer to be the political advisor to the group and liaison with Marshall Plan headquarters. At that time there was in Paris a fellow named Paul Porter, who had been head of the Marshall Plan mission in Greece. He had been a professor at the University of Wisconsin, if I'm not mistaken. He was the number three in the Marshall Plan headquarters in Paris and he interviewed me for the job. I was impressed by the way in which he conducted the interview. He decided to send me down as political advisor to this group. So I worked in Spain for about four months. All of the fall and early winter...the fall of '51. But I did return to Paris after that mission and left Paris in September of '52.

Q: And then you went to Madrid, is that right?

FLOTT: No, I went to Madrid, as I said, in August '51, stayed there four months...it was about a four month deal.

Q: What was your impression of the Franco regime in that period?

FLOTT: Again, nothing is as simple as an American liberal education would make you think it might be. The Spanish Fascists were obviously bad, but they were also the product of circumstances. They were also the people running the country. Some of them were less objectionable than others. We wanted to get a base agreement and we got a base agreement. Part of the purpose of the economic study was to reduce to a minimum the inflationary impact of what for the Spanish economy was this very considerable investment that we were going to be putting into Spain. By and large we were successful in that. We worked with some good people. The Spaniards by that time were very anxious to be on our side and to do the right things and, within reason, take our advice—at least listen to it.

Q: How did this group mesh with the Embassy? I think Stanton Griffiths was the Ambassador and I was just wondering how they viewed these experts from out of town.

FLOTT: I met Stanton Griffiths a number of times. We were in the field most of the time. I'm sure he had more revealing conversations with the chief of the group, Dr. Suffrin. I think there was some conflict between the Embassy and the Group, but perhaps nothing more than the usual bureaucratic abrasion. No knock-down, drag-out fights. No major issues divided them. Mild questions of turf, perhaps, over who was supposed to be talking to whom. But all of that was handled with reasonable collegiality.

Q: What did you do after you left Madrid and France?

FLOTT: I came back to the Department. I was put through a course to learn Russian.

Q: And then your next assignment overseas was to...?

FLOTT: To Tehran...

Q: ...where you served from '54 until '56?

FLOTT: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

FLOTT: My assignment was made about the time of the August, 1953 coup against the Shah, and when at first Mossadegh prevailed, the thought was that the Russians' influence in Iran would increase. So I was sent there probably because I spoke Russian.

Q: You were ready to greet the Russian troops!

FLOTT: They figured they'll send a guy, who, in case the Russians came in, could deal with them. But then the countercoup took place, most of the pro-Russian elements were

thrown out, and there suddenly emerged what could be described as a very promising environment in which to resist Soviet encroachments. The government of the returned Shah worked very closely with us. Junior officers tended to divide their tours. I spent one year in the Economic Section and one year in the Political Section. I tended to deal with anything concerning the Soviet Union, economic, political, or consular.

Q: Did we feel that the Soviets were involved in the Mossadegh business or were they just taking advantage of it and the aftermath?

FLOTT: I would say the Soviets took advantage of it, as they would take advantage of anything that served their purposes. I do not think for a minute that Dr. Mossadegh was pro-Soviet. In fact, he did some wonderful anti-Soviet negotiation in the brief time that he was in power. There was an old institution in Iran—the management of the Caspian Sea's caviar product—it was called Iranryba, up on the Caspian Sea. It was on Iranian territory, but in effect it was run by Russians, traditionally, since the Czar's time. It was an anachronism and a niche the Russians had had there for a long time. While Mossadegh was making all of his strident noises about nationalizing oil and throwing out the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and all, he also went to the Russians, who were courting his favor. He said, “Now look, I'm certain you would agree that there are certain anachronisms that have to be removed. At the same time that we throw out the oil company, I think my position in the world would be much better if we ended this little Soviet caviar concession monopoly on the Caspian”. The Russians, in an opportunistic way, went along with that. So Mossadegh gets credit for throwing the Russians out of the caviar business in Iran! He did have a popular base. He was perhaps incapable of governing. If he had stayed in power, he might have produced disorder that the Russians would have taken advantage of much more dramatically, but they never really got around to it. As you might imagine, we wanted to watch them very closely.

Q: Did you have the feeling that they were messing around in things?

FLOTT: Yes, they were always looking for angles to pursue their interests and confound our politics.

Q: What was, during this time from 1954-56, your impression and those of the people with whom you worked, of the Shah? He'd come back—he had fled—he was pretty young at the time.

FLOTT: Yes, he was quite young. At that time, the impression of him was that he was a team player; his heart was in the right place; he wanted to modernize and improve the country. The excesses that later became part of the public record and all, were less apparent at that time. We certainly had no major differences with him in 1954. He wanted to defend his country against Soviet encroachments of all kinds—ideological, military, commercial, everything, and so we were natural teammates. I would characterize him at that time as a team player. I had a couple of meetings with him to brief him on the Soviet threat and help prepare him for his first official trip to Moscow.

Q: What about the contacts from our Embassy? Were these able to get out to "the people"— beyond the upper class?

FLOTT: The American Embassy in Tehran was later accused of failing to have broadly-based contacts. At the time I was there that certainly did not seem to be the case. But the Embassy, after all, was accredited to the government of Iran, and inevitably it dealt with the people in the government to which it was accredited. The Embassy was concerned about former "Tudeh" elements, the former Communist Party of Iran. We were very much against them and tried to keep track of them, but so was the government of Iran. The best way to fight the Tudeh and fight communist incursions was to be cooperative and reasonably loyal team players with the government, which, after all, had the same objective.

Q: Selden Chapin was the Ambassador?

FLOTT: Yes. I was very impressed by him. He was a wonderful man. I should say that right at the beginning of my tour Loy Henderson was still there as Ambassador. I served in Paris under him in 1947. He was from Chicago; his wife was a Russian from Lithuania. The Hendersons left a month after I got there. I worked very closely with Selden Chapin. He put me in charge of Soviet matters. His wife had lung cancer, or something pretty debilitating, and spent most of her time in bed. So at six o'clock in the evening, after work, he would have a small staff meeting around her bedside, just so she could know what was going on. There was really no reason not to do it that way. As a result, I spent many pleasant evenings with them talking. He was interested in sharing with her, in a very good way that certainly didn't hurt in any way what the Embassy was doing on various subjects. These informal sessions offered a good way to get the Ambassador's undivided attention on some issue.

Another example of my work with him—I got to Tehran in January of 1954 and in early August of 1955, Supreme Court Justice, William O. Douglas had been giving some law lectures in New Delhi. It was an annual forum. He had a visa to go to the Soviet Union and he was going to be joined in Tehran by Robert F. Kennedy, who was then a 28 year old lawyer on the Senate Government Relations Committee. Douglas had tried for several months to get a visa for an American interpreter to go with him. He knew he didn't want to be totally dependent on the Soviets for interpretation, both for the credibility of what he did and for getting the straight story. But the Soviets never granted a visa for any such person. But Douglas raised the question with Selden Chapin when he got to Tehran. He asked, “Do you have in your Embassy someone who speaks Russian who could go in with Bob Kennedy and me?” Ambassador Chapin asked me if I'd be willing to do it, and I said, “Yes, I'd be glad to.” So I was so ordered. I would spend a little over a month in the Soviet Union. All of which is written up in Arthur M. Schlesinger's biography of Bob Kennedy—”Robert Kennedy and His Times.”

Q: What was your impression of Robert Kennedy?

FLOTT: He was certainly a very committed anti-communist, which was good. He was, of course, younger then than he was later. He could be characterized as a little bit brash, a little bit take-charge; and often unnecessarily offensive to the Russians. Justice Douglas, on the other hand, could learn what he wanted by being less outwardly offensive, even though we were all equally anti-communist. But Bob was a good loyal fellow and I enjoyed my friendship with him, which went on as long as he was alive.

Q: Well, I think we might as well move on to Bonn. Or were there any other incidents that happened?

FLOTT: No, the high point in a way during my Tehran tour was the trip into the Soviet Union. So I came home, home leave, and was assigned to Bonn in January, 1957.

Q: David Bruce was the Ambassador?

FLOTT: Not at the very beginning, but he arrived shortly thereafter.

Q: Before that it was Conant?

FLOTT: Yes, Ambassador James B. Conant, but actually Dr. Conant had left Bonn, I believe, just before I got there. There was a Charg# for a while; then David and Evangeline Bruce arrived. I was there two and a half years.

Q: What was the impression of the political system in Germany at this time. This was twelve years after the War.

FLOTT: We thought they were doing a lot of good things. They were making a lot of progress. In 1957, there was still a lingering suspicion that the leopard had not completely changed its spots, and that you just can't be too sure. There was that caution. There was great respect for Dr. Adenauer, the Chancellor. But there were still some reservations about the evolution of the German body politic.

Q: What was the view of the Soviet threat?

FLOTT: That they might in three hours be in your backyard. In country team staff meetings, the Air Attach# would assure us that if it came to a war with the Russians, we would win it.

Q: About the same time, I was in Frankfurt, my first post, from 1955 to 1958. I was a consul.

FLOTT: The political officer from Consulate General Frankfurt came up to Bonn about once a month, and attended our political section staff meetings.

Q: My job in case of war was to set up a card table in a parking lot and document Americans. At the same time, we were told we had about three hours from the Fulda Gap, by tank, to Frankfurt. They did keep wheeling those big atomic canons about the place which made one wonder about how they would use them.

FLOTT: The Germans were just recreating their army then. My duties in the Embassy in Bonn...again, I had, to a certain extent the Soviet account, which at that point took the form of assisting the Germans in any way we could. The United States was the protective power for Germany in Poland and Czechoslovakia. That was before the Germans had direct diplomatic relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia. I worked with the German Red Cross on family reunification issues; humanitarian issues. I liaised between the German Foreign Office and the American Embassies in Prague and Poland for matters on which we helped them—family unification, etc.. Then, about a year earlier the United States had negotiated a cultural exchange agreement with the Russians. We had negotiated it very sharply to make sure every “t” was crossed and every “i” was dotted. About 1958 the Germans were preparing to negotiate a similar agreement with the Russians, and I had instructions to share with the Federal Republic everything we had learned from our earlier negotiations with the Soviets. So I had the pleasant duty of coaching the Germans on how

to be appropriately suspicious of the Soviets, and get everything nailed down tightly. They were good pupils!

Q: What did we think about East Germany?

FLOTT: We thought it was an unfortunate situation that could not be changed for the time being. We had an underlying faith that it would not last forever. I doubt if anyone in his right mind would have predicted that it would end as quickly, as completely, and as bloodlessly as it did. That was a pleasant surprise, of course.

Q: What about Berlin?

FLOTT: Berlin, of course, was a big issue. One of things I did with Ambassador David Bruce and one of the occasions I had to spend as much time as I did with him was on trips to Berlin. We had an Army railroad train, about six cars, VIP configuration, that was allowed to ride the rails into Berlin. Once a month, to maintain the principle, to keep the right alive and active in practice, Bruce would ride the train up overnight from Bonn to Berlin. He would call on the Soviet Commander, and I would go with him on those calls. Berlin was very important; it was a test of just how far the Soviets were willing to go, and it was a test for us to show our determination. It was a good issue that the Germans were unified about.

Q: Did we see, at that time, any difference between the CDU and the SPD? Obviously Adenauer of the Christian Democratic Union was in.

FLOTT: Yes. We certainly saw the difference between the CDU/CSU, and the SPD. I would not give us credit for having anticipated the enormous Ostpolitik changes that took place in l970 under Willy Brandt. We regarded the German Socialist Party as essentially a democratic party that was one more European socialist party that we weren't too alarmed about. It was perhaps not quite our choice, our way of doing things, but we would never have accused it of subversion or anything like that. They just had a different approach than

the CDU/CSU. We had very collegial relations. I'm sure the American Ambassador would be equally polite to both parties and to their “Fraction”, to their party group people in the parliament. There was a very polite relationship. We had considerable respect for a lot of things they were doing.

Q: What about NATO? Did you see Germany melding well with NATO or was this still a trial period?

FLOTT: There were lots of amusing incidents or differences of very small detail along the way, but the broad sweep of the process was encouraging. The Germans were strictly on our side. They were going to resist any Soviet incursions, but they were also at great pains to avoid looking bellicose or warlike.

Q: I know they came up with a uniform that was not very militaristic at the time.

FLOTT: They did everything: they changed the national anthem; they changed the flag. Do you remember a thing called the EWG? the German initials for the European Defense Community? It was something that almost happened, but didn't quite happen. During the time when that was being budgeted, all the European countries were budgeting what the defense budget would be for a combined European Defense Force. As you might expect, with the product of professionals who were good economists, the costing estimates were very close from all the interested countries, except when it came to the matter of field clothing, of uniforms. The German estimate was about four times what everybody else had put in. When we inquired why was there this unusual wide discrepancy, their answer was that the Germans were equipping them all to fight in Russia with polar, warm, clothing! They weren't going to get caught again like November, 1941. Actually, the European Defense Community at that time did not materialize. The Germans built up their army. They would occasionally argue with us over points of detail—whether our machine guns were any good. Quite late in the game, when the Americans came out with the M-60; it was almost an exact copy of the thing the Germans had been using since 1942; it even

looked like it. The Germans would needle us a bit about that, in a friendly, collegial way! In almost every respect, there was a good collegial relation with the Germans, partly because the Germans had no place else to go. There were arguments over what was known as “Stationierung” questions which we at first tried unwisely to describe as “Occupation” costs. They didn't want to regard it as “occupation”; it was “stationing” the troops. There were arguments over how many cartons of cigarettes the PX could sell per American per week. We made reasonable accommodations. What the Americans were left with was certainly a very generous formula, but it did cut into some of the worst, most flagrant black market abuses, which the Germans quite legitimately tried to reduce.

Q: Again, we move on. You moved to Geneva from 1959 until 1962?

FLOTT: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

FLOTT: At that time, at first it was a Consulate General in Geneva, it later became the US Mission to the European Office of UN. I was the political officer in this group. Geneva was the venue for many international conferences. I served basically as an advisor to all these visiting American delegations, especially on Soviet matters...perhaps helping a bit with the liaison with the Germans, the French, and other delegations.

Q: At that time, could you describe what you would tell these delegations about negotiating techniques, or how the Soviets negotiated?

FLOTT: Quite frankly, the first time I got into the Geneva business, I was still serving in the Political Section of the Embassy in Bonn in May, 1957. The annual meeting of the ECE in Geneva was coming up—the Economic Commission for Europe, a UN entity. On the American side it tended to have as its head, as chief of delegation, a political appointee who was a good contributor to Eisenhower's victory, but who did not have time enough to become a full time Ambassador. He got the next best thing, which was an

appointment as chief of the U.S. delegation to the ECE Plenary. The Embassy in Bonn and the Department asked to have me sent from Bonn down to Geneva, as a member of the delegation, with only one specific duty and that was to make sure the U.S. delegation did not inadvertently recognize the German Democratic Republic. I ended up doing other things and socializing with the Russians, interpreting a little, and helping with drafting. But basically that was it. Also, I had the job of cooperating with the Germans and seeing that the American delegation was helpful to the Germans in any way we legitimately could be. That was generally a successful effort, and after that I was assigned permanently to Geneva to continue doing the same sort of thing with a wide range of visiting U.S. delegations.

Q: What was the Soviet style of operating?

FLOTT: The Soviets, of course, wanted to throw their weight around. They wanted to behave like a great power. They did have certain inferiority complexes which they tried to overcome in a variety of ways. Sometimes by being reasonable; sometimes by being willing to learn, but mostly by throwing their weight around in a very heavy-footed way to show how big and tough they were. They, of course, wanted to exercise leadership in the socialist camp. From the point of view of individual members of the Soviet delegation, they had only one concern and that was to look good at home by being militantly anti-American, anti-Western, anti-capitalist. Very aggressively asserting their leadership in the socialist camp.

That made them look good at home, which was not only career building but also enhanced their life expectancy, because if they had not done it, their years might have been shortened.

Q: Was their ever a time when both delegations—the Americans and the Soviets—would get together and agree that "Okay, we'll give our anti-speech and you give yours, and then we'll get down to work".

FLOTT: I wouldn't say there was that much agreement, but occasionally references were made when the agendas for meetings were being set. If the Soviets would say that we want to address this problem, we might reply, “Well, if you put this item on the agenda, we will be obliged to reply appropriately.” There were slight exchanges of that sort, but there was no real coordination or co-conspiracy; there was a little bit of reaction occasionally.

Q: Were they sort of mirror images of each other?

FLOTT: The whole name of the game and the whole product of the exercise was largely posturing and not giving an inch. Our not letting them score any points that we could help, and their not wanting us to score any points they could help. The UN technocrats, the number-crunchers among the UN economists would try and write an objective description of just how bad the economy was in Eastern Europe and Russia. Of course the Russians would object and threaten to have them all fired and all. We would say, do tell us more, because they weren't telling us as much as we would like them to. There was that kind of game. There was no major policy formulation done at the time. There was just a constant, on-going effort, that we did for forty years, of taking their temperature and sizing them up; resisting their encroachments; making it very clear that they weren't going to be allowed to get away with anything. That is basically what we did. In a way it was done successfully. This may all sound rather negative. It was. But I really do not believe we could have done anything more creative or more positive at that time. The Soviets were just not ready to talk. We did not miss any opportunities; there were none.

Q: Did other delegations look upon the United States as people to do that sort of thing and maybe go their own way? For example the French.

FLOTT: Yes, the French wanted to exercise their sovereign and French right to be different and do something different from what we were doing. We listened to them politely and compared notes. The British had benign amusement at what they regarded as the sometimes excessive enthusiasm the Americans brought to their anti-Soviet efforts, but

they didn't really dispute that we were on the right side of the issue. They just thought we were excessively militant. We didn't mind being known as that.

Q: As a professional sitting there dealing with this thing time after time and you had these delegations that would come out and many of the people were authorities, not even authorities, but political appointees, but really pretty naive in this type of world. All of a sudden they would arrive in a difficult negotiating arena. Was this a problem for you?

FLOTT: It could have been a problem, but I must say these political appointees were willing to take advice. They were team players. They knew we and they were trying to do the same thing, in pursuit of the same national-interest objectives. Even at my modest, second secretary level of access to them, any advice I gave to them on how to play the Soviets, I must say, they always accepted it. It was not that my advice was all that remarkable, but they were team players, good people who were willing to acknowledge that a professional in this business probably had some insights.

Q: Any horror stories?

FLOTT: Nothing bad, really. There were a few minor, occasional, little protocol flaps. There was one chief of delegation, a very wealthy American from the private sector—lots of money—and the group went over to a casino across the border, to Divonne in France, and this fellow went around handing out the French equivalent of ten dollar bills to all the American wives to play on the tables. His deputy, who was with him and from his corporation, realized that his boss was going a little bit far, so he collected the money discreetly and returned it to his leader. So there were very minor protocol flaps, but basically, these were very public-spirited citizens who were very capable of teamwork, and whose hearts were in the right place. They were trying to do a good job for the U.S., and usually they succeeded.

Q: You went from the quite gentility of Geneva to Saigon where you served from 1963 until 1966. I might say for the record, you have given extensive interviews on this to the LBJ Library, and I hope at some point I could have some copy of that.

[Note: a copy is appended]

FLOTT: Those records are available to American scholars at the LBJ Library and I have copies that I can lend you.

Q:...and I can make copies of, which I will include in this.

FLOTT: There is really nothing I can tell you about the Saigon years that is not in the very thorough eight hours of tape at the LBJ Library in Austin, Texas.

Q: Absolutely, then let's not do it. You left Saigon in 1966 and you came back to the EA bureau from 1966 until 1972.

FLOTT: Yes, but most of that time I was in Europe. I was on a roving mission of information, briefing European parliamentary foreign affairs committees and foreign offices on what we were trying to do in the Vietnam peace negotiations—winding down the War; the American position; what we were trying to do, and so forth. That involved trips back and forth between Geneva, Paris, and Saigon, traveling all over Europe briefing, foreign offices and parliamentary foreign affairs committees and the media.

Q: When you left Vietnam in 1966, about a year before the Tet Offensive, what was your impression at that time about how things were going in Vietnam.

FLOTT: I had instinctively, and from everything I had seen while there, deep reservations about the breadth of the popular base of GVN, the government of Vietnam. They did not look like winners to me. I had doubts about what they could carry off. In that scepticism, I suppose I was quite right. The place where I was wrong was in thinking that the massive

application of American power on their behalf would carry the day and change the outcome, I didn't appreciate just how difficult it was to nail jelly to a wall as far as shoring them up was concerned. Again, when you are in an embassy that is under attack and occasionally there are casualties and that sort of thing, you don't try to understand the other fellow all that much. I was very gung-ho on the effective prosecution of the war and on trying to find effective ways to defeat the North Vietnamese within the obvious American political constraints.

Q: Tet came in January of 1968. What was your impression of Tet as you heard it.

FLOTT: It was immediately clear that the American media and television were playing it up. I learned later that the Tet outcome did have a terrific impact on American opinion and its support for the War. I suspected at the time, and learned later, that militarily the Tet offensive was quite a failure for the North Vietnamese. Some of their best units, and infrastructure and covert assets, they just used up. This remarkable infrastructure which they had managed to build up in the South was all expended; by their standards, very heroically. But they shot their wad without producing any real military results. But clearly it did have a big impact in the United States.

Q: As you did your trips around Europe, what were some of the reactions?

FLOTT: Basically, I was talking mainly to our friends and allies, or to conservative neutrals, like the Swedes and Norwegians and all. Well, the Norwegians were a NATO power. They all had reservations about whether we were doing the right thing. They didn't question our main point, that we had to resist Communist expansion. That if we abandoned the South Vietnamese, washed our hands of them, where would American credibility be? What indeed would NATO think? How could other countries rely on American guarantees?

What would the Soviets think of our guarantees for Berlin if we suddenly let the Vietnamese go down the drain? And these were points with some considerable validity. The Norwegian socialist might question whether we sized up the Communist implications

right in Vietnam and question the wisdom of our making the kind of effort we did. They were not hostile, certainly not militantly anti-American. They listened to us. They figured that the Americans are probably wrong, at least on the question of degree, on this issue, but on the other hand, at least their hearts are in the right place and they're doing all this partly for us, as well as themselves. It was that kind of an attitude. I certainly always got polite audiences from the European foreign offices and military and from the conservative parties in the parliaments. The left-wingers in the European parties were quite a bit more strident in their objections. But again, I would not say that they were outright anti-American. On one occasion, when I spoke to a Communist Party-oriented group in Holland, they gave me a reasonably polite reception, probably in order to look more respectable themselves, I suspect. I didn't get anything thrown at me. I talked to quite a wide range of groups. I was regarded by the American side as being persuasive at it, and all the American Embassies I visited scheduled me fully and usefully.

Q: Did you find yourself, as you went out on this salesman job, looking over your shoulder at where the American government was standing?

FLOTT: We knew the elections were coming up and we knew what the different political parties were saying. The line that we were selling was pretty moderate. We weren't saying that this was a wonderful little war and everybody should be more enthusiastic about it. We said that this was a very difficult situation for which there were no quick, easy answers and painting, I think, pretty persuasively, what the consequences of an outright withdrawal or abandonment of Vietnam would have been. We said, “This is what we are trying to negotiate; we think this is a reasonable, minimum position and to serve other greater goods, we have to hang in on it.”

Q: Did the invasion of Cambodia and then of Laos, in the spring of 1970, throw things off at all?

FLOTT: I was actually back in the States the night of the Cambodian incursion. I was making a speech at a small college in Hickory, North Carolina and suddenly had to defend that. Of course, in Hickory, North Carolina, it was easy to defend the incursion on the basis of our using military strength to save American lives. And must you absolutely allow your enemy to have untouched lines of communication?

Q: I must say, I was in Saigon at the time and I was applauding it.

FLOTT: I was too! Like most things we did; it did not work out as well as we thought it might.

Q: Were you finding more and more dissent within the Foreign Service? Were you feeling, that you as a Saigon hand, were out there and there were a lot of people in the Foreign Service, maybe not the Vietnamese hands, who were saying, well, you go speak your piece but this is a real mess we've gotten into.

FLOTT: I had a certain amount of credibility as an advocate and a spokesman because I had been out there for three years, which gave me credibility. I was regarded as credible on the advocacy side of the thing. In fact, I got a decoration from the Department, the Superior Honor Award, a little pin to wear on my lapel! There were some people who dissented about it, and I had great respect for them, for their having the courage to take a position that was very difficult in a structured body like the Foreign Service. Some people objected to our Vietnam policy, but most of them would be very cautious about doing it publicly. They did it, for the most part, in properly restrained ways and there was nothing in their behavior that I couldn't respect. They knew, by the same token, that I didn't like the War any more than they did, but rather that I was addressing the world-wide consequences of how the Americans handled it and their disengagement from it.

Q: You were rewarded with an Honor Award, but you were also sent to Jakarta where you served from 1972 until 1974. How did you feel about that?

FLOTT: It was good to go out to a post as a Political Counselor. I did not have any previous experience in Indonesia; I did not speak the language. I was really sent for one purpose, which was to help the Indonesian military, the government establishment—to get them to support our efforts in the winding down of the Vietnam War. There was the International Commission of Control and Supervision and there was a job of persuading the Indonesians to participate in this, which simply served American national interests as well as Indonesian and ASEAN interests. We wanted the withdrawal from Vietnam not to be perceived as an American defeat or abandonment, but rather as a broadly based Asian, winding down of things. It was helpful to get the Indonesians involved and because of my credibility on Vietnam, it was felt that I could be helpful in that respect. This effort was successful, and served Indonesian as well as American interests at the time.

Q: Were you talking to the Indonesian military or Suharto's government? Or were they one and the same things?

FLOTT: To the Foreign Office. The Assistant Secretary for EA in the Indonesian Foreign Office was a man from “Kopkamtib” the military intelligence part of the Indonesian Army, and he was in charge of national security affairs. I joked with him once that it might seem unusual for somebody with his professional background in security to become head of the East Asian Bureau of the Foreign Office. He replied that in Indonesia, anything that happens in East Asia is regarded as a national security question. I worked with him, and the Indonesians were willing to accept in some significant measure our advocacy about the importance of sending a team to Saigon. They had five hundred people in the ICCS, and sustained some casualties. They did their bit and earned our gratitude.

Q: What role did they play? We are talking about a period from 1972 to 1974.

FLOTT: The Poles were there and the Hungarians were there, as clearly in favor of the Socialist camp. The Indonesians were there as clearly pro-American, anti-Communist forces. Then, I think the Canadians were accepted as being neutral, from the ICCS days.

In our Embassy I handled the Jakarta end of the Indonesian participation in the winding down of the Vietnam War.

Q: Were you there at the fall of Saigon?

FLOTT: No, by then I was out and I was back in Geneva on the day President Ford went to play golf and Saigon fell. I was in Geneva as the Secretary of the U.S. Delegation to the Law of the Sea Conference. It was sort of a chief of staff job for coordinating the work of about one hundred lawyers and the Law of the Sea Delegation.

Q: Back to Jakarta. Francis Galbraith was the Ambassador at the time. How did he operate?

FLOTT: He was very conscious of the right division of labor. Galbraith was a man of great experience on Indonesia. He had been there for several tours. He had been there as a junior officer when Indonesia first got its independence. He and his wife were junior or mid-level officers who taught the Indonesian wives how to go to cocktail parties and how to entertain. As a result, he had friendships that went way back and he commanded great affection and loyalty from the Indonesians. He felt that was what he knew best and he tended to concentrate on that. He also knew that I didn't know much about Indonesia or have any kind of long-term Indonesian relationships. He did know about my European experience and he would delegate to me anything concerning the Soviets, NATO, anything concerning the Latin Americans. What happened was, I went out there as political counselor, as number three in the American mission, but then the DCM had a heart attack, so I spent a lot of my time as Acting DCM, which made me nominally number two in the mission. It was a big mission and a big diplomatic corps. Ambassador Galbraith conveyed to the European and Latin Americans that he rarely accepted invitations from them. He felt it was his job to concentrate on the Indonesians. He spoke the language well and could do that very well. As a result, whenever any Latin American chief of mission entertained, I was inevitably invited. As you know, a more junior person cannot leave a party before the

more senior persons do, so typically there would be a lot of Latin American ambassadors sitting around until three in the morning drinking and telling stories, and I, as Acting DCM, had to stay until they started leaving. The only difference was that I had to be working at 8 o'clock in the morning, running a political section or part of an embassy. There was also the question of collegial briefings to our NATO allies, which in terms of our world-wide diplomacy, had to be done. Somebody had to do it; so that job fell to me. The care and feeding of the French, briefing them, keeping them on board with what we were doing, and being collegial and pro-Western Europe. So I did a lot of that kind of briefing. Ambassador Galbraith asked me to handle the relation, if any, with the Soviet Embassy. I spent a lot of time taking their temperature, having a channel to them if we should want a channel. I did not get into purely Indonesian things very much. My deputy, FSO John Monjo, spoke Japanese, Cambodian and pretty good Indonesian, and was up to speed on ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations. He tended to handle all that sort of thing. He later became Ambassador to Indonesia and now he is Ambassador to Pakistan. He is a first rate man. So the division of labor worked out well. No talents were wasted, and everyone did what he could do best.

Q: Had the Soviets written off Indonesia as a place to make any impact after the failed coup in 1965.?

FLOTT: The Soviets in the field would never dare to write off anything. They would never miss an opportunity to show their militancy in support of Soviet causes, partially for consumption back home. But I think that they felt that realistically Indonesia was certainly a hostile environment to them. I think they probably thought that because Indonesia was a poor country, with considerable social and economic injustices, that, who knows, maybe in time their day will come. They maintained a presence and access, but they had no illusions of quick, early profits, because a lot of the Communists had been bumped off. The Russians could conveniently blame that, not on the deficiencies of the Communist doctrine or system, but on the ineptitude of their Chinese enemies. They could, with considerable reason, say that the purge of the Communists in Indonesia was the result of the Chinese

over reaching some years before. No Soviet was going to get into trouble at home by blaming the Chinese for everything bad, in his conversations with Americans.

Q: Was Timor an issue while you were there?

FLOTT: No, it hadn't yet become an issue. The Portuguese had just begun to pull out. The people who knew the Indonesian thing best probably would have predicted pretty well what the attitude of the Indonesian military would have been. The “Manifest Destiny” aspect, as they saw it, of Timor.

Q: What about the Australians? Were we and the Australians on the same wave length?

FLOTT: Very much so. They had a first rate embassy there. In Jakarta, in addition to ourselves, the big players were the Japanese, the Dutch, and the Australians. Ambassador Galbraith used to tell us at country team meetings and at staff meetings that our embassy was clearly the best, the best informed and the most knowledgeable. But that there were, nonetheless, other embassies in special situations that had something to offer. They were, the Japanese on economic matters; the Australians on how they were reacting to the long term Indonesian military equation, and the Dutch, because of the depth of their knowledge of Indonesia and of the access to the older established families, who still spoke Dutch and would often talk freely with the Dutch. If you spoke Dutch, even when I was there in 1972, it was like old money versus new money. There were these brash young men in the military who had learned English at Fort Benning, but the really old established families, who were even something in old colonial days, spoke Dutch and they were quite proud of that. But those three embassies we regarded as being first rate in their niches. We worked with a special warmth and collegiality with the Australians; with the Dutch as well. The Dutch perhaps had more underlying reservations about what we were doing in Vietnam, but they were a very loyal, NATO country. We shared anything we could learn about the Soviets with them, and they, in turn, shared with us what they learned.

Q: What was our general impression of Suharto at that time as the leader?

FLOTT: He was a moderately able leader of the country who got into the job because of the fortunes of war, the repression of communism, and the liquidation of the Sukarno legacy. He was cooperative with us, doing things we sought in many respects; obviously pursuing Indonesian interests, not wanting to be too irrevocably in the American camp, vis a vis the Vietnamese because, who knows, the Vietnamese may win and for long term reasons, he had to have access to them. Even we wouldn't have disputed his approach to that. We had good relations with him and cooperation on all the things that really mattered to us.

Q: You again got yourself back into international organizations with the Law of the Sea.

FLOTT: I was nominally the Deputy Director of the Office of International Conferences, as a slot from which to be Secretary of Delegation of our enormous Law of the Sea Delegation in Geneva.

Q: This would be during the Nixon and Ford administrations, 1974-1976. What was the American attitude toward the Law of the Sea, because under the Reagan administration it was really a very hostile one.

FLOTT: I was out of it before Elliot Richardson took over. I would have really enjoyed working with him. Our Delegation included representatives from Treasury, Commerce, Interior, Defense, State, EPA—everybody was in the act. If I had to say what our most important consideration was, really taking the world as it was then, and the priorities as they were, it would be the free passage of submerged submarines. Innocent passages, submerged, in the narrow seas. The reason for this was that it was very relevant to our always being in a position to fight the Soviet Union and do a good job of it, if the need arose. There was on the Delegation a hearty young Admiral from the Navy Department who kept reminding me of the importance of this. There were a lot of Third World countries

who might have said, “Well, our territorial sea has to go from twelve miles out to a hundred miles or something”. We really didn't care all that much who caught what fish where, but we did want to have the right for our submarines to negotiate those waters submerged.

Q: Underwater mining was not much of an issue?

FLOTT: Underwater mining, no, but underwater collection devices, yes. Picking up the vibrations...sensors. The issue that was formally addressed was innocent passage, submerged. We would argue that any boat could go in its normal mode. The normal mode for a passenger liner was on the surface, and the normal mode for a submarine was submerged. Of course, international law recognizes the importance of “normal mode” and all we were seeking was to allow the submarines to do it in their normal mode, and thus maintain the secrecy of their whereabouts.

Q: Of course these things were armed with nuclear weapons.

FLOTT: Well, yes, of course, but for a nuclear sub, that was a normal thing!

Q: How did you go about this business?

FLOTT: We found that the Third World people were trying to crowd us for as much as they could. Nobody seriously questioned the importance of anything related to the Soviet Union, even then. But they all had their own charters, including the different American members. Lawyers were able to argue indefinitely on all sorts of issues.

Q: What was your impression of American international lawyers?

FLOTT: They were trained lawyers and some were very able people. The legal advisor at the Department and Chief of the Delegation was John Stevenson, who had been the managing partner of Sullivan and Cromwell of New York. They were good, first-rate people. Some of them were in it for the very short term, to have access to the revolving door or something. Some of them were extremely able, top of the line, who were doing

it for patriotic reasons, like John Stevenson and many others. Some were bureaucrats reflecting a narrowly parochial view, say, of some part of the Bureau of Mines of the Interior Department.

Q: How were things actually resolved?

FLOTT: It would be hard to put a finger on it. I would not say that John Stevenson could hear everybody's arguments and then make a firm ruling. In some cases he did, mainly because he was persuasive and because of his leadership. On some occasions, differences weren't resolved. We agreed to disagree.

Q: What was role of U.S. business in this in the Law of the Sea negotiation?

FLOTT: There was a quite important business involvement. Take, for example, the international copper companies. Or the question of deep sea mining for minerals. I wouldn't characterize these business representatives as lobbyists, but rather as industry experts who joined our delegation and assisted it considerably. If they weren't formally accredited as government employees, they came out there and were available as expert references. They were quite interested. For instance, some of the Third World countries, world-wide, probably including Afghanistan, thought anybody who mines copper in the deep sea beds should pay royalties to, among others, Afghanistan. There were environmental things. Obviously you couldn't rinse out your tankers on the high seas. Most people were concerned about the environment. There were lesser things like the extent of damages that might be charged if there was a leak. The Third World countries could think of anything. I think if they could have charged tolls on the tankers that went from the Persian Gulf through the Straits of Malacca on their way to Japan, they probably would have tried to talk us into it. Of course the Japanese would have resisted it. But back to the differences in view points by the many and varied participants in the US delegation, ultimately, any treaty would have to be approved by the Congress, which meant there

would be a battle of influence and advocacy with the Congressional committees that dealt with it, which is where the final crunch would have come.

Q: You were there during a particular period?

FLOTT: All the time that I was assigned, nominally, as Deputy Director of the Office of International Conferences. I was actually in Geneva or Paris nine-tenths of the time on one delegation or another. My job was coordinating those who were willing to be coordinated.

Q: The negotiations weren't by any means finished when you left?

FLOTT: No. There had been a Venezuela round, a Caracas round, which I was not a part of, but apparently it was a real shambles of disorganization. I'm told Secretary Kissinger rattled his cage and said that the next time we go out I want you to make sure there is somebody running that who can assure some measure of order and keep it running more smoothly. I don't know if he specifically put me up or somebody else did; however, I was asked to do this and did it for the rather long Geneva round which was four months, and more before we went out and after we came back.

Q: The ultimate thing, as we talk in 1992, is that we never signed the Law of the Sea treaty did we?

FLOTT: No, we did not.

Q: You moved from the Law of the Sea into narcotics, is that it?

FLOTT: Yes. When I was in the EA bureau, I had occasional contacts with Congress on international narcotics matters. They set up for the first time in Congress a Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control. The Chairman, of course, was a Democrat (from the majority party), Lester Wolf. I had known him from the Vietnam business, when

we were on opposite sides of the argument and from other narcotics discussions about which he was interested.

He had the unusual advantage of having been a high school classmate of Henry Kissinger. He asked Kissinger to have me assigned as Counselor for International Relations to his Select Committee. As you know, the Department can, not always entirely willingly, make people available for that sort of thing. I did that for about a year and a half, helping this Congressional Committee deal with foreign governments and the State Department.

Q: What was your impression of how the State Department was dealing on narcotics matters with the Congress?

FLOTT: At the highest level, namely Kissinger, it was certainly realized that if the Chairman of the Select Committee asks for assistance, you should give it to him and also, if he asks for somebody ad persona to be assigned, you should probably let him have his way, unless you have not only a better suggestion to make, but one that would prevail, meaning one he would accept. So Kissinger went along with this. The people in the Department dealing with narcotics things would probably have preferred that they be the only State contact with the Select Committee. I'm sure that the Bureau for Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs would have preferred that they be the only contact. So it goes. It's almost like the Law of the Sea Conference in the wide range of people who are involved in narcotics issues—Department of Health, HHS, Department of Justice, State. Everybody gets into the act.

Q: Narcotics weren't that high on the agenda or?

FLOTT: It was beginning to be pretty high. Even if the State Department had preferred that Chairman Wolf handle his affairs differently, nobody wanted to be in the position of refusing any request for support from a Congressional Select Committee on narcotics matters.

Q: Were we leaning heavily on some countries at the time? Was this a problem for us?

FLOTT: We were indeed leaning heavily. We were seeking cooperation from some countries. We had some successes and some failures. There was a legitimate place for showing the flag. Chairman Wolf traveled a lot and I went with him on all these trips. We had some success in negotiating and on some occasions his committee was able to be supportive of some things in the Department. We, of course, tried to be supportive of the Department's position when we could.

Q: Were there any particular trouble spots that caused unhappiness in the Congress and the State Department wasn't able to get much cooperation? Any particular countries?

FLOTT: Traditionally, a lot of opium came from Turkey and because of the American ethnic politics, the Greeks would always be glad to jump on the Turks.

Q: This was at the height of the Cyprus crisis.

FLOTT: Yes. You can count on the Greeks to be anti-Turkish and you can count on some politicians to play with that. On the other hand, the Turks got very good marks from the Israelis. They had been very helpful to Israel in many respects, so you could always seek to get AIPAC to be understanding of the Turk's problems and to acknowledge what Turkey was trying to do.

Q: AIPAC is the very powerful Jewish lobby?

FLOTT: It is the powerful American Israel Political Action Committee. Then there were South American phenomena. Mexico was very cooperative on police things, except sometimes the police were corrupt and it was very impolite to point that out. But to some extent you had to, or perhaps some Congressman would point it out, more publicly and less delicately. On the other hand, you didn't want to throw the baby out with the bath. You

would not want to disrupt a generally useful working relationship just to catch some corrupt cop.

Much cocaine came from Bolivia and Colombia. You had to work with these people. Our embassies in these countries didn't want to get too tough with them on narcotics matters, at the risk of damaging overall bilateral relations. But our embassies certainly understood the importance of being responsive to the purposes of the Congress.

Q: So it was a balancing act?

FLOTT: Yes. It was a balancing act; doing the best you could under the circumstances.

Q: How effective do you think the driving force of this House Select Committee on the narcotics matter was while you were there?

FLOTT: Congress had great interest in it. It did some good. It was able to mobilize Congress on behalf of the Department's anti-narcotics efforts, and also the DEA. If anyone was slack in the traces, the Select Committee could point this out and they would shape up. It performed a useful role. Anytime I gave the Members advice on how to play a particular thing, they were cooperative and willing to hear what I had to say, which was largely what the Department had to say anyway.

Q: What type of things would this be?

FLOTT: How best to make pitches to different governments. How to phrase things. Really, one of the charms of working with the Congress...I remember especially one occasion, right after I had gotten there. Chairman Wolf was the Chairman of the Select Committee. He was a Congressman from Long Island. That day, about 8 o'clock in the morning, I had learned that the Egyptian Customs Service had just seized a boat that was trying to smuggle narcotics into Egypt. I told Lester Wolf about it at 8:30 in the morning. I told him that he might wish graciously to acknowledge and praise this Egyptian success, by

saying a word about what their Customs Service had done. He agreed, and asked me to give him a three paragraph piece on the subject. He said he could go to the Speaker of the House and be the first speaker that morning. I wrote out three paragraphs on how the Egyptians had done this and that we commend their commitment to this effort. I wrote that the Egyptian Customs Service is one of the oldest in the world and have a great tradition of fine work. They did well this time and we hope this cooperation will continue. Wolf made this brief speech when Congress opened in the morning. These well-deserved words of praise of Egypt coming from a Jewish Congressman from Long Island. You can imagine how happy the Egyptian Embassy was. We were doing the right thing by giving credit where credit was due. The Egyptian Ambassador was grateful. We had alerted his Counselor to pay attention to what was going on in Congress that morning. So they were very grateful. It rewarded them—a quick pay-off for doing the right thing. It was a quick extension of our influence. That was all done between 8:30 in the morning and 9:00 or 10:00 A.M. Can you imagine what I would have had to go through had I been seated in the Department of State trying to get clearances and concurrences? This is an example of the kinds of things you could do when on detail to the Congress!

Q: You retired about that time didn't you?

FLOTT: I was on a delegation to the 32nd UN General Assembly. That was my last assignment. Chairman Wolf was a member of the delegation and I went along, partly on international narcotics matters, but partly on UN administrative matters. I had some insights from the IO experience. We wanted to get more performance out of the UN in support of anti-narcotics matters. One of the ways to do it was to take a gimlet eye view of the overall UN budget and then be persuaded to be more forthcoming if we thought they were doing more on that account. It was after that that I retired.

End of interview